



U.S. Interests Section Newsletter

Information for American Citizens in Cuba
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USINT HOSTS SECOND ANNUAL MEETING OF U.S. CITIZEN WARDENS



The American Citizen Services Unit (ACS) hosted the Second Annual Wardens' meeting at the residence of the Chief of Mission (COM) in Havana City on Nov. 21, 2008.

Wardens from 10 provinces attended the session. Consul General Sean Murphy thanked the wardens for their valuable service to American citizens during a year when three major hurricanes battered the Caribbean island.

USINT speakers spoke about a variety of topics including hurricane preparedness and public health information.

COM Jonathan Farrar concluded the program by recognizing the important contributions wardens make to our American community.

STATE DEPARTMENT HOSTS INTERNET BLOG

The State Department has an official blog called "*DipNote*" at <http://blogs.state.gov>. This blog represents your opportunity to engage State Department officials and contribute directly to discussions about U.S. foreign policy. The State Department wants you to be active participants in the today's most important international challenges.

DipNote gives context, clarity and other behind the scenes insights on the foreign policy headlines in which you're most interested. We live in an age when you need to be aware of what is happening around the world and everyone should contribute to the dialogue.

You can join *DipNote* on *Facebook*, follow us on *Twitter*, or submit your video question on the State Department's *YouTube* Channel. Share your ideas today!



ACCESS USINT WEBSITE IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH

The U.S. Interests Section Website in Havana is now in both English and Spanish languages.

The English language site is at:
<http://havana.usinterestsection.gov>

The Spanish language site is at:
<http://spanish.havana.usinterestsection.gov>

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PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION SHOWN AT USINT

The Inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44th president of the United States was broadcast at USINT on Jan. 20, 2009, with wardens as invited guests.

Inauguration events began with President-elect Obama attending a church service. Next, both President Bush and President-Elect Obama walked together to the Capitol for the swearing-in ceremonies. First, Vice President-Elect Biden took the oath of office.

President Obama took the oath of office signifying his dedication to protect the rights of all Americans. This was followed with President Obama's Inaugural Address highlighting the new president's goals and vision for the Nation.

The day's festivities continued with an Inaugural parade as President Obama and Vice-President Biden accompanied by marching bands, floats, and members of the military on Pennsylvania Avenue. After the parade, an Inaugural Luncheon was held as traditional speeches, gifts, and toasts were offered to the new administration.

Later, thousands of people attended inaugural balls in Washington, D.C.

IRS 2008 TAX GUIDE AVAILABLE FOR U.S. CITIZENS LIVING ABROAD

The IRS has a new tax guide to help tax filers prepare their 2008 taxes. IRS Publication 54, the "*Tax Guide for U.S. Citizens and Resident Aliens Abroad*", is available at the IRS website: <http://www.irs.gov/publications/>. This publication discusses special tax rules for U.S. citizens and resident aliens who work abroad or who have income earned in foreign countries.

If you are a U.S. citizen or resident alien, your worldwide income generally is subject to U.S. income tax, regardless of where you are living. You are subject to the same income tax filing requirements that apply to U.S. citizens or resident aliens living in the United States. Expatriation tax provisions apply to U.S. citizens who have renounced their citizenship and long-term residents who have ended their residency.

IRS Publication 54 contains useful tax information such as:

- Whether you must file a U.S. tax return,
- When and where to file your return,
- How to report your income if it is paid in foreign currency,
- Withholding Tax for income, social security and Medicare taxes from the pay of U.S. citizens and resident aliens,
- Self-employment tax, and
- Foreign earned income exclusion, housing exclusion, and deduction.

Identity Theft and Your Tax Records

The IRS has identified a type of fraud related directly to your tax records.

An identity thief may file a tax return using your social security number to receive a refund or stimulus payment. If the thief already filed a return using your Social Security number, the IRS will believe you just submitted a duplicate filing.

If you receive an IRS notice and believe you are a victim of identity theft, contact IRS immediately including the name and number with the IRS letter.

THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE TRAVEL INITIATIVE



The **Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI)** requires travelers to present a passport or other document that denotes identity and citizenship when entering the U.S. The goal of the initiative is to strengthen U.S. border security while facilitating entry for U.S. citizens and legitimate foreign visitors.

Currently, U.S. citizens must show proof of identity and proof of U.S. citizenship when entering the United States from Canada, Mexico, Bermuda and the countries of the Caribbean by land or sea.

Beginning June 1, 2009, the U.S. government will require most U.S. citizens entering the United States at **sea or land ports of entry** to have a passport, passport card, or other travel document approved by the Department of Homeland Security.

For additional passport information see:

<http://travel.state.gov/passport>

For additional travel document information

visit: <http://www.dhs.gov>

WORLDWIDE TRAVEL CAUTION

The State Department issued an updated Worldwide Caution message on Feb. 2, 2009, to inform about continuing threats of terrorist actions and violence against Americans and interests throughout the world. Visit: http://telegrams.state.gov/aldac/view_telegram.cfm?teleid=8455699 for more information.

Enter the 2009 Voting Slogan Contest Today!

The Federal Voting Assistance Program is pleased to announce the kick-off of the biennial contest to promote participation in the democratic process among citizens covered under the *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act* -- all U.S. citizens residing outside the United States.

“Be Smart, Do Your Part, Vote!” was the winning slogan for the 2007 Voting Slogan Contest. To enter just create a simple slogan that expresses the importance of voting and will inspire one to vote. A panel of judges will review all slogan submissions and choose the winning slogan on its originality and motivational value. The winning slogan will be featured in the FVAP’s 2010/2011 outreach campaign which includes the FVAP website at www.fvap.gov, the 2010/2011 Voting Assistance Guide, posters, and other publications.

All submissions must include your full name, mailing address, daytime telephone number, and e-mail address (if applicable). All entries must be received by **April 9, 2009**.

How to submit entries: **E-mail:** slogan@fvap.ncr.gov. Text only (e-mail messages with attachments are deleted for information security purposes). One slogan per e-mail including contact information. Visit the FVAP website at www.fvap.gov for more information.

ATTENTION STUDENTS INTERESTED IN WORKING IN A U.S. EMBASSY

Have you ever thought that you might like to work in a U.S. Embassy abroad? One way is to become a Foreign Service Officer with the U.S. Department of State. For more information about a career with the Foreign Service, please go to www.careers.state.gov.

U.S. Passport Renewal:

The First Step toward a Great Spring Break

Spring break is just around the corner. It's a good time to visit family in the United States or just do some exploring closer to home. But, before you book the tickets, check the expiration dates of your family's passports. Renewing passports early can save you both time and expense. Remember, all American citizens must enter and exit the United States on a valid U.S. passport. **CONTACT:** American Citizen Services at 833-3551/59, ext. ACS for more information



2009 HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

USINT offices will be closed on U.S. and Cuban official holidays.

DATE	DAY OF THE WEEK	HOLIDAY
January 1	Thursday	New Year's Day (U.S./Cuban)
January 2	Friday	New Year's Celebration (Cuban)
January 19	Monday	Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday (U.S.)
February 16	Monday	Presidents' Day (U.S.)
May 1	Friday	Labor Day (Cuban)
May 25	Monday	Memorial Day (U.S.)
July 3	Friday	Independence Day (U.S.)
July 25 - 27	Saturday - Monday	National Revolutionary Festival (Cuban)
September 7	Monday	Labor Day (U.S.)
October 10	Saturday	Commencement of the Wars of Independence (Cuban)
October 12	Monday	Columbus Day (U.S.)
November 11	Wednesday	Veteran's Day (U.S.)
November 26	Thursday	Thanksgiving Day (U.S.)
December 25	Friday	Christmas (U.S./Cuban)
December 31	Thursday	End of Year's Celebration (Cuban)

Contact Information: American Citizen Services, Consular Section,
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Website: <http://havana.usinterestsection.gov/>

Walk-in Hours: Mon.-Thu. 8:00-4:30pm, Fri. 8:00-3:30 pm.

Closed U.S. & Cuban Holidays and the first Friday of each month